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## MADRID: ITS GOVERNMENT AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES

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The activities of the government of the Spanish capital are a peculiar composite of ancient and modern institutions. The strong contrasts met on every side in local commercial life are mirrored in the conditions of the public service. In the former, motor wagons and oxen share the work of delivering merchandise, and in the latter we find a paid civil service in charge of one part of the administrative work of the municipality, while another—the collection of imposts—is farmed out to a private company.

### *Administrative Organization.*

The central organ of the municipality—the *Ayuntamiento*—is elective but unsalaried. For representation in this council the city is divided into ten districts, in each of which five members are chosen by universal suffrage, making a council of fifty besides the mayor, who has a deciding vote only. The representatives are elected for a term of four years, one-half being retired at every biennial election, thus making the council a permanent body. Under its final supervision must nominally come all projects affecting the municipality. Sessions are held at the call of the mayor. The office of the mayor is the only one which is officially a charge upon the public treasury, and even the sum assigned to this office is not received as a salary, but as a “supplemental allowance” due to the extraordinary expenses necessary as the chief magistrate of the capital. The city provides for his use a stable and coaches, for the maintenance of which a yearly appropriation of over 35,000 pesetas<sup>1</sup> is

<sup>1</sup> Presupuesto del año, 1905. The peseta, at the present rate of exchange, is worth slightly more than fifteen cents.

required. In addition, a cash credit is granted amounting to 25,000 pesetas. Even with the allowance, however, the "honor" of becoming the city's chief magistrate is so expensive that it can be accepted only by the wealthy.

The lesser offices in the municipal government constitute a permanent service. The salary is generally low, but is supplemented by an allowance for house rent or by furnishing the houses directly. Further, due to the short department hours, those who wish are able to supplement their earnings by work taken outside their official duties. The official day is never more than five hours and in actual practice much shorter. Curiously enough a considerable number of clerks are able so to arrange their work that they can hold two offices under the government at the same time. Such a practice is strictly prohibited both by royal decrees and by the city regulations, but the objection is regularly avoided by having the second salary credited under the name of a "gratification for service," a subterfuge which has not been questioned by the Spanish courts. The permanent city official also acquires a right to a pension based upon the highest salary received, at any time after twenty years of service.

### *Street Cleaning.*

With the exception of the protection of persons and property, the only one of the greater public services undertaken directly by the city of Madrid, is the cleaning of the streets. Up to 1894 the work was done in the most primitive manner and so small was the force employed that even in that year it was asserted that not one-tenth of the work assigned to a man for a day could be accomplished.<sup>2</sup> The general dissatisfaction induced the council to attempt the introduction of modern methods and a large investment was made in mechanical brooms and similar appliances.<sup>3</sup> This also did not satisfy the public, for though the conditions of the streets improved, the charge upon the treasury was altogether out of proportion to the actual service. In 1895 the service was placed in the hands of a Belgian company. The change brought admittedly the best service the city has ever had, but two years later, owing to alleged failure to fulfill some of its obligations, the company was

<sup>2</sup> Hauser: *Madrid bajo el punta de vista Medico-Social*, Madrid, 1902. Volume I, p 208 et seq.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

forced to surrender its charter to the city council. The administration by the council since that time has gradually improved, though even as late as 1899, 450 broommen formed the entire force and the conditions were far from satisfactory. Under the present city management the use of mechanical appliances has almost disappeared. On a few of the boulevards skirting the parks, horse-power sweepers are still regularly used, but with this exception the usual implements are hand brooms. In the work of sweeping there are employed a little over 700 men for the entire city. The brooms used are made by the men themselves from faggots supplied by the municipal authorities. In the greater portion of the city, after the first sweeping is finished, the streets are flooded with water every day to carry away the remaining dust. In the chief business district the care of the public ways is at present quite up to the modern standard, but in the poorer and newer quarters the badly paved and sometimes entirely unpaved highways make difficult proper cleaning and the small number of men assigned to these portions makes it impossible to do the work thoroughly.

The entire cost of the sweeping and flooding of the streets is only 574,875 pesetas (\$86,215)<sup>4</sup> or a little over 15 cents per year per inhabitant. The small expenditure is due both to the neglect of the outlying quarters and to the cheapness of the manual labor employed. In the entire force of 949 men in the service there are but two—the paymasters—who receive a salary as high as fifty cents a day. Six hundred and fifty, including all the overseers, timekeepers and broommen receive 37½ cents or less and the 100 men who attend to the flooding of the streets receive but 22½ cents<sup>5</sup> per day. This wage represents the entire income, as these men are but day laborers and do not receive houses at the city's expense or a pension after a period of service.

The wages paid by the city for street cleaning are rather higher than those given in general for manual labor, as the average wage for unskilled labor is one peseta (15 cents) a day. The low wages are not, however, at least to the same extent as in other parts of Europe, counterbalanced by a low cost of food for partly due to the *octroi* the price of even the staples is relatively high. Potatoes, for example, cannot be bought for less than \$1.00 a bushel, and "gar-

<sup>4</sup> Population of Madrid, 1905, 533,286.

<sup>5</sup> Budget for 1905.

*banzas*," the sort of chick pea which forms the chief ingredient of the daily food of the working classes, cost six cents a pound.<sup>6</sup> Meat, too, is so expensive that it is practically absent from the table of the laborer.

### *Disposal of Garbage.*

The disposal of the garbage of the city is divided among two forces,—one public the other private. First there is the force administered by the city, which is charged with the disposal of both the street sweepings and the garbage. In practice, however, almost all of the latter is disposed of through people who adopt the collection of garbage as an industry. To engage in this business a special license must be purchased from the city, which allows the holder to ply his trade within a specified district. The service is rendered to the householders gratuitously, the only pay received for the work being the garbage itself. Those who engage in the business are generally aged men and women, who take the refuse away by means of donkeys carrying woven baskets. Only the absolutely worthless is thrown away, which, to these people, means a very small portion. Every rag is carefully saved, washed and dried; all the bones, scraps of paper and bits of straw find their way to different piles, all of which are marketed separately. Every scrap of bread or vegetable which can be made to serve as food for man or beast is put to use. Finally, what is left is sold as fertilizer. This is indeed an unusual state of affairs, for the disposal of the garbage, instead of becoming a charge upon the city treasury or upon the inhabitants directly, actually becomes the means of gaining a livelihood for a large number of people, and at the same time becomes a source of public income. The extent to which what may be called the "garbage business," has developed in the city may be seen from the fact that, in 1905, there were issued 600 licenses to engage in the work, contributing fees to the city amounting to 6,000 pesetas.

The relief, direct and indirect, thus afforded the public finances by this method of collection, is its only recommendation, for the refuse is uniformly carried in open baskets, from which the smaller particles are easily blown by the wind, and the disposal made of the vegetable parts is far from conducive to public health. The

<sup>6</sup> Compiled from the market quotations, for the year 1904, of the *Heraldo de Madrid*. Rent, however, is low. Out of the 101,077 habitations in Madrid in 1902, the rent of 40,325, or almost 40 per cent. was equivalent to \$3.00 or less per month. Hauser, page 494, Vol. I.

better portion serves as food for the collectors themselves, and the rest is regularly fed to chickens, rabbits and hogs kept in the small courts of the poorer districts of the city.<sup>7</sup> Such a method of disposal, it is needless to say, "constitutes a constant menace to sanitary conditions in normal times, and an excellent means of spreading disease in times of infection."<sup>8</sup>

### *Public Lighting.*

The system of public lighting in the Spanish capital shows traces of the different stages of its development. It is still provided that in the courts of houses, and before the doors of all private dwellings, lamps "shall be kept lighted during those hours of the night in which the doors opening on the streets are unlocked."<sup>9</sup> In the poorer districts, too, the public streets are still lighted by kerosene lanterns. In fact, in all the outlying quarters, the lighting is in very poor condition, and the lamps so far apart as sometimes to make it impossible to see two from the same spot. The characteristic means of lighting in the more settled districts is gas, the expenditure for which constitutes almost four-fifths of the entire appropriation for the purpose. Electricity is as yet a comparatively new departure as a means of public lighting, indeed the latest edition of the public ordinances contains no regulations for its installation or use, either in private houses or on public property. The number of arc lamps on the principal streets is being rapidly increased, however, and plans are already in execution to introduce electric lighting in all the business portion of the city within the next two years. The fittings for all lighting are purchased and installed at the city's expense, but the supplies of both gas and electricity are furnished to the city through private companies, paid at a rate fixed by contract, and by special subsidies for terms of years.

### *Water Supply.*

The water supply of Madrid is not, as in most cities, a service performed by the city or those licensed by it, but is a joint work

<sup>7</sup> The regulations of the city are commonly disregarded in this respect. See *Ordenanzas Municipales*, Madrid, 1903, p. 90.

<sup>8</sup> Hauser: Vol. I, p. 210; also preceding pages.

<sup>9</sup> *Ordenanzas Municipales de la Villa de Madrid*; 2d ed., 1903, Madrid, p. 35. The rule is uniformly disobeyed, however. Indeed, in the better streets, lamps over the doors would be wholly superfluous.

of the municipality and the central government. The local government indeed simply maintains the delivery of the water within the city limits. From the time of its foundation to the middle of the last century Madrid suffered under a constant scarcity of water. Even at that date there were only fifty-nine public pumps and watering places within the city.<sup>10</sup> The *Ayuntamiento* had "seriously considered" increasing the water supply for over a quarter of a century, but the plans never got any further than the paper stage. In this state of affairs the central government undertook to supply water to the city, and irrigation to a large stretch of country at the same time, by a canal designed to conduct the waters of the Lozoya, a snow-fed river of the Guadaramma Mountains. The first project was completed in 1858, and Madrid received, for the first time in her history, an adequate water supply. Since then the growing demands of the rapidly increasing population of the capital, and the increased use of water for irrigation in the surrounding fields, have necessitated additional reservoirs, greatly increasing the supply of water. But even so the capacity has not always been sufficient for the needs in times of drought, and in 1896 and 1899 the government had to recommend that the use of the water for flooding the streets be discontinued.<sup>11</sup> The quality of the water, as tested at the reservoirs and rivers in the mountains, is said by chemists to be excellent. At its source it contains hardly any animal matter, and less than one-sixteenth of the amount of solids which are considered allowable in drinking water.<sup>12</sup> By the time the water gets to Madrid, however, although the amount of solids is still low,<sup>13</sup> there is an objectionable amount of animal and vegetable matter, due to the fact that the canal is uncovered for a great part of its length. This necessitates its purification by the usual methods of filtration, which renders the water of Madrid "safe and wholesome under ordinary conditions."<sup>14</sup>

From the first the method of adjusting water rates was open to many abuses, some of which continue even to the present day. The city government was granted a certain amount free, but under this

<sup>10</sup> Hauser, 228, also states In 1854 there were besides 421 private wells in the city.

<sup>11</sup> Ruiz Jiménez, *Interpelacion al Ministro de Fomento*, 11 Nov., 1899. See also Hauser chapter on water supply; *Incharraundieta*, *Revista de Obras Publicas*, 13 Feb., 1891, on the Canal of Lozoya.

<sup>12</sup> See Horacio Bentabo y Ureta *Las Aguas de España*, 2d ed., p. 183.

<sup>13</sup> Chemical analysis, in 1902, by Dr. César Chicote, Chief of the Chemical Laboratory Madrid, gave solid content as about 1.8 of that allowable.

<sup>14</sup> See Passim Chapter on Canal. Hauser.

permit it has used, and still uses, all it needs, which, with the development that has taken place, is now many times the amount to which it is entitled.<sup>15</sup> Many private persons were allowed to acquire free use of the water, an abuse against which steps were first taken only two years ago.<sup>16</sup> Until recently the water rates were regulated according to the number of faucets, no matter what the quantity used. A change to the meter system is being made at the present time, the charges being from five to seven and a half centavos per cubic meter. Where meters are not in use the water rate is based on the yearly rental of the dwelling.<sup>17</sup>

### *Street Railways.*

Originally the tramway system of Madrid was in the hands of ten distinct companies, who furnished a mule-car service from the outlying quarters to the central plaza of the town—the Puerta del Sol. The radial plan of the system, which came to be a feature of the organization in the early days, is still maintained, almost without exception, in spite of the fact that in some cases a different organization would much better serve the needs of traffic. At present all the lines converging in the centre of the city are managed by one company, the only remnant of their former independence being the charters regulating the relations of the different divisions with the city. Only one small company serving the outer quarters still maintains a real independence. The charters under which the street cars are operated at present are the same as were formerly granted for running the lines of mule cars, except that they have additional clauses allowing the owners to change the motive power. Electricity has not indeed superseded mule power entirely, and even on the central line the old-fashioned cars are used to supplement the more modern service on occasions when large crowds must be accommodated, such as the days of the bull fights or the more popular church festivals. The maximum fares are fixed in the charters, and range from five to thirty centavos. None of the concessions are held in perpetuity, the longest being for a term of sixty years. In all cases a small annual payment is made to the city, but the amounts in most

<sup>15</sup> Sr. Incharraundieta, *Revista de Obras Publicas*, Feb., 1902.

<sup>16</sup> Royal Decree of 6th Feb., 1903. The regulations of 1903 also prohibited the granting of any free water rights in the future. *Reglamento para el Servicio y Distribution de las Aguas del Canal de Isabel II*, Madrid, 1903.

<sup>17</sup> Royal Decree of the 14th of July, 1905.



cases are the same as specified in the original contracts when mule power was used, and the entire income of the city from all the lines amounts to but very little over \$10,000 per year.<sup>18</sup> The city has uniformly reserved to itself numerous rights of control over the tramways. Among these may be mentioned, the setting of the time of departure for each car, the speed at which those drawn by mules may go, and the determination of the number of persons to be carried in each car, including a provision that when all the places are filled no more passengers must be allowed to enter.<sup>19</sup>

### *Food Inspection.*

To provide for the purity of the food of the inhabitants, the city council has greatly extended public supervision. For testing the quality of all food entering the city a special inspection service is kept at all the gates, and a public laboratory is charged with the analysis of all suspected products. As an example of the minutiae into which the regulations enter in some cases, the rules affecting the sale of bread may be taken. First, a special license must be secured from the council. All bread destined for sale must contain only wheat flour, yeast, common salt and water. The addition of anything else, even though it in no way alters the nutritive qualities of the product, is punished by fine. The loaves must be made in standard sizes, and the third report of short weight results in the revocation of the license. Ovens must have a certain size and location. All bread must have the name of the manufacturer stamped upon it, and the price at which it is to be sold. Finally, a regulation which is explained by the political history of the capital provides that "a supply of flour must be kept on hand sufficient for six days, with the object of tiding over any conflict that may occur."<sup>20</sup>

The supervision of the meat supply extends not only to the inspection of the quality at the gates, but all slaughtering in the city must be done in the municipal slaughter houses. The private slaughter of animals to be offered for sale subjects the offender to fine and confiscation of the animals killed. The publicly administered slaughter house is by no means an institution of recent origin in Madrid. An establishment of a similar character is said to

<sup>18</sup> Presupuesto del Año 1905.

<sup>19</sup> Ordenanzas Municipales. Pp. 29-33.

<sup>20</sup> Ordenanzas Municipales, 53-59.

have been maintained as early as the fifteenth century,<sup>21</sup> but its development on a large scale, to the exclusion of private undertakings, dates from 1855. At present two separate establishments are maintained, one for cattle, sheep and goats, the other for hogs. It may be mentioned that the meat of horses and mules, in contrast to the practice in many cities in Northern Europe, cannot legally be sold for food in Madrid.<sup>22</sup> The purchase and sale of the animals to be killed is entirely free and independent of any supervision on the part of the government, which confines itself to the inspection of the animals and to the killing, and dressing of the meat. For this service there is a permanent force of employees. The charges for killing vary from four pesetas for cows to 1½ pesetas for goats. The inspection of the animals by the government is thorough, and the entire establishment for handling cows, sheep and goats is thoroughly modern in sanitary arrangements and administration. As much cannot be said of the department for hogs,<sup>23</sup> which is located in a building far from suited to the purpose. A curious regulation limits the slaughter of hogs to a definite season—the one hundred and forty-two days following the 30th of October. It is considered that the consumption of fresh pork at other times is “dangerous to the health of the community.”

### *Municipal Pawn Shop and Savings Bank.*

Two very interesting and successful municipal establishments now placed under one management are the municipal pawn shop and savings bank. In the pawn shop two classes of loans are issued, on clothes and jewels and on public securities. The rate of interest charged is but one-half of 1 per cent. per month, as contrasted with 2, 4 and even 6 per cent. charged by private houses. If the goods are not redeemed they pass to the salesrooms, where they are sold by public auction, and if more than the amount of the loan is realized the balance is returned. The loans on public securities are only made with the balance not demanded by the other business and never exceed 80 per cent. of the market value. The plan has been of great assistance to the classes for which it is intended—the poor in

<sup>21</sup> Hauser, p. 306.

<sup>22</sup> Hauser and Ordenanzas Municipales.

<sup>23</sup> Hauser, 306: “It is an anachronism of our time and a menace to the health of the inhabitants.”

temporary distress, and the goods are redeemed in over 90 per cent. of the cases.<sup>24</sup>

No less successful is the municipal savings bank. So popular has the institution become that on account of the unsatisfactory condition of the national finances it has become impossible to find a satisfactory use for the money offered to its care. The rate of interest to be guaranteed has had to be reduced and the amounts of individual deposits limited to 5,000 pesetas.. Notwithstanding the restrictions the number of depositors has grown steadily and during 1904 reached 497,295.<sup>25</sup>

### Taxation.

Undoubtedly the most remarkable feature of the government of Madrid is the method of collection of the municipal taxes. Under the existing laws only the central government can levy taxes on real and personal property, so the city has but a limited field from which to draw its income. Practically all the city taxes, now amounting to about \$4,800,000 a year, are derived from fines, commercial licenses and taxes on fuel and food. Commercial licenses are extended over almost every branch of business, even down to permits to sell small articles in the streets, permits to collect rags, and taxes on business signs and extent of window display. All such imposts together, however, constitute but 12 per cent. of the yearly income and the chief reliance must be the tax on food stuffs.<sup>26</sup> The history

<sup>24</sup> ——— "Segundo Centenario de la fundacion del Monte de Piedad de Madrid." Madrid, 1902.

<sup>25</sup> ——— "Memoria y cuenta general del Monte de Piedad y Caja de Ahorros, Madrid, 1905.

<sup>26</sup> It is, perhaps, needless to point out the inequality of such a method of taxation. In a city like Madrid, where, it is asserted, almost one-tenth\* of the population live in a state of almost hopeless poverty, the results of any *octroi* system must be especially bad. Up to the present, however, even the bare necessities of life have been subject to the imposts. The rates have been very high, as may be judged from the following quotations: "Imposts to be exacted by the Compañía Arrendataria" (the money is given in American equivalents). Chickens, 5 cents each; veal, 4 cents pound; fish, 3½ cents; flour, ½ cent; "Garbanzas" (chick peas), ½ cent pound; milk, 1 cent quart. The rate on live animals is: Goats and sheep, 70 cents each; hogs, \$5.20; cattle, 2-4 years old, \$11.20; cattle over 4 years, \$15.00.† In the near future it is proposed to remove from the list a few of the necessities of life, chief among which are milk, flour, bran and sugar. The effect of such taxes on the food of the poorer classes may be judged from the following statistics for 1904: The total consumption of prepared and salted meats in the city amounted to 1,200,000 kilograms, or about four pounds per inhabitant, while the average consumption of fresh meats of all classes reached only 98 grams per person.‡ The

\* Hauser, Vol. I, p. 297. 52,000 in 1902.

† Compiled from Presupuesto del Año, 1905.

‡ Compiled from the Report of the Compañía Arrendataria by Fisher, Representative in the Ayuntamiento.

of the management of these imposts in Madrid is anything but a creditable one. Up to 1897 the city was engaged in a futile attempt to secure honest administration of the imposts by public officials. Every year loud protests were raised against the management because favored persons, especially influential members of the city council, were allowed to bring in goods without paying the legal dues. In this way such decided advantages were given to a few merchants that competition with them in the market was practically impossible. Further, at the end of the administrative year, the city was invariably confronted by a shortage in the returns which no raising of the imposts was able to overcome. As a consequence the city debt was steadily growing in spite of the increased tax rate on businesses and food stuffs. The situation finally became so intolerable that it was decided to give over the management of the municipal taxes on food and fuel into the hands of a private company. This form of management has been in use since 1897 and the question of its continuation for another period of five years is now the subject of a vigorous campaign in all parts of the city.<sup>27</sup>

The system amounts in fact to no less than a reappearance of the old Roman method of farming the taxes, with the exception that the *rate* of taxation is fixed. The right to collect the imposts is sold at public auction, and the bidder makes all he can by instituting a minute system of examination and a rigorous enforcement of the limit of the imposts allowed in his contract with the government. The management has been so inquisitorial that all classes are united in the opinion that a change at least in details must be made. Against the renewal of the contract protests have been raised by almost all the organizations of Madrid, including the Mercantile Union, Chamber of Commerce and all the trade unions. There is, however, a large conservative class which, though it realizes the exasperating character of the present regulations, still hesitates to take the step which might plunge the city finances into the chaotic state in which they were when the taxes were managed by public officials. It is insisted that the present expedient has proved a success in one way at least; it

high tax on milk, too, brought in its train lamentable conditions. The price of that brought into the city was so high that it made it profitable to keep the animals in the city and feed them on food hauled in from the country. In 1902 there were 232 such stables maintained in Madrid. The effects of the necessary confinement of the animals was revealed by an investigation of 215 samples of milk among which 170 were found to be impure. §

§ Boletín del Laboratorio Municipal de Madrid, 15 Jan., 1902.

<sup>27</sup> The date set for the beginning of the next term is Jan. 1, 1906.

gives the council a reasonably fixed basis upon which to calculate the municipal income, and the city has received much more in actual cash through means of the *Compañía Arrendataria* than it ever did during the public management, notwithstanding that the rate of imposts has been lower. On the other hand, the public treasury has admittedly paid very dearly for the management of its finances by the private company, the earnings of which, though not made public, are admitted to be very large.

The introduction of the use of the *Arrendataria* in municipal government gives Madrid a distinctive but hardly enviable position among modern cities. At best, the solution brought in this way can be justified only under the head of political expediency, but the repeated failure to organize a public service capable of honestly administering the local taxes cannot help but throw a strange and unpleasant sidelight on the civic life of the Spanish capital.

Further, the method of taxation in use hampers the development of all the services of the city. At present taxation does not reach the real wealth of the city except by insignificant indirect imposts. Therefore, by a process of exclusion, the city is forced to rely upon the taxes on articles of daily consumption, and every increase in the appropriations for public services must be overwhelmingly at the expense of the laboring population. The evils resulting from such a situation are not confined to Madrid alone, but are felt generally throughout the peninsula. One of the changes most generally advocated by the press of the country is the passage of laws which shall provide for greater municipal independence in matters of taxation. Until such action is taken it cannot be expected that Madrid can command the resources to bring her public services up to the standard demanded by her population and her position as the capital of the kingdom.